

**TITLE:**                    **The Impact of the Catholic Social Tradition at Catholic Universities:  
A Research Initiative**

**PRESENTERS:**       Kurt Schlichting, Fairfield University  
                             Roger Bergman, Creighton University  
                             Harry Dammer, Scranton University  
                             Bill Purcell, University of Notre Dame

One of the challenges of Catholic higher education in the twenty-first century is to provide the kind of education that speaks to the core of the institution's identity and mission. "Born from the heart of the church" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*), as Pope John Paul II described the origins of a Catholic university, our institutions have special obligations. One of them is found in para. 34 of that document: "The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students."

How is that done? How do we teach, and how do our students learn, the principles and practice of the Catholic social tradition? Several of the universities have explicit programs focused on this tradition and provide students with way of engaging it in their curricular and co-curricular choices. Other institutions speak to the CST in their mission statements and provide opportunities for student engagement which reflect the CST.

This multi-year research project involves faculty and staff from 12 Catholic Universities (see list below). The primary research question is to determine whether the Catholic Social Tradition, as either an explicit or implicit part of the curriculum and experience at Catholic universities, has a measureable influence on students and alumni.

Several of the participants have written and conducted research to this area. The research is a collaborative that bridges several different types of Catholic Universities sponsored by two different congregations, i.e., the Congregation of the Holy Cross (CSC) and the Society of Jesus (SJ).

Drawing on faculty and staff from various fields (e.g., history, peace studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology), planning is underway for a multiple institution, long-term research project to identify the conditions and experiences enhance understanding of and commitment to CST principles, and how institutions can foster the practice of the Catholic social tradition.

We will begin a series of pilot studies this summer which build on existing research efforts, both qualitative and quantitative. Notre Dame secured foundation support for the planning process. Additional funding will be sought for the long team research.

At the conference we will report on the research conducted this summer, and outline the long term research plan. We also welcome other institutions involved in similar research to let us know what they are doing.

#### Participating Institutions

Creighton University

Fairfield University

Fordham University

Gonzaga University

College of Holy Cross

Loyola University Chicago

Loyola University New Orleans

Notre Dame College

University of Notre Dame

University of Scranton University

University of San Francisco

Villanova University

CST – Research Project website:

<http://blogs.nd.edu/cstresearch>